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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 876
By Briley

A RESOLUTION to honor the Grand Ole Opry and its members
on the celebration of their 75th Anniversary.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are proud to specially recognize an estimable institution that has contributed significantly to the country music industry and has brought acclaim to this great state the world over; and

WHEREAS, no mass media event is more associated with the state of Tennessee than the WSM radio program known as "The Grand Ole Opry". Not only is The Grand Ole Opry the longest-running radio show in U.S. history, but it is renowned as the cornerstone for the dynamic commercial art form of country music; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Ole Opry and its offspring comprise, or are affiliated with, the state's major tourist attractions, and The Opry's commercial power and attraction have been the primary reasons for Nashville's emergence as a music recording center; and

WHEREAS, the saga of the Grand Ole Opry began on the night of November 28, 1925, when a young announcer on Nashville radio station WSM introduced an 80-year-old fiddle

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player, Uncle Jimmy Thompson, as the first performer on a new show called “The WSM Barn Dance”; and

WHEREAS, announcer George D. Hay, who labeled himself “The Solemn Old Judge,” but was neither old nor a judge, realized he had started a good thing that fateful night; and

WHEREAS, now, almost 75 years later, the radio show Mr. Hay started is still going strong; The Opry is the foundation for a huge entertainment and resort complex and has been instrumental in Nashville claiming the title of Music City U.S.A.; and

WHEREAS, this acclaimed radio show followed an NBC network radio program on Saturday nights called “The Music Appreciation Hour;” in 1928, Mr. Hay announced on-the-air, “For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from the Grand Opera, but now we will present ‘The Grand Ole Opry’”; the name stuck and the rest is history; and

WHEREAS, crowds of people would come to the studio and stand in corridors to enjoy the Grand Ole Opry in person; WSM then decided to move the Opry to its own home, Studio C, wisely believing that the reactions of an enthusiastic audience of 500 fans would greatly enhance the program; and

WHEREAS, the crowds kept growing, and the Opry was forced to move again and again, first to the Hillsboro Theatre in southeast Nashville and then to the Dixie Tabernacle; and

WHEREAS, in July 1939, the newly constructed War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Nashville became the Opry's new home; an admission fee of 25 cents was imposed to control the ever growing crowds, but it failed to deter anyone from attending America's favorite radio program; and

WHEREAS, in 1943, the Grand Ole Opry began its three decades of residence at the Ryman Auditorium, which seated 3,000; during this time, the Opry expanded to include two shows on Saturday nights, as fans flocked to see the Gully Jumpers, the Fruit Jar Drinkers, and the Crook Brothers; and

WHEREAS, it was not until 1938 that singing claimed its rightful place alongside the instrumental music for which the Opry had become renowned; Roy Acuff and the Smoky Mountain Boys filled the Ryman with such classics as "The Wabash Cannonball" and "The Great Speckled Bird"; and

WHEREAS, in 1939, the NBC Radio Network began carrying a portion of the Opry as a network show; during the 1940s and 1950s, such outstanding headliners as Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Hank Snow, Marty Robbins, Ray Price, Grandpa Jones, George Morgan, Kitty Wells, Johnny Cash, and Porter Wagoner became favorites across the nation; and

WHEREAS, this elite group of members of the Grand Ole Opry saw the addition of Loretta Lynn, Bill Anderson, Dottie West, Connie Smith, Jack Greene, and Jim Ed Brown in the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, while the Opry's popularity remained solid throughout the years, the Ryman Auditorium eventually deteriorated, thus bringing about another relocation; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Ole Opry said goodbye to the Ryman Auditorium in 1974; on March 15, 1974, President Nixon joined Roy Acuff on stage at the new Grand Ole Opry House, where an eight-foot circle of hardwood that been taken from the Ryman was placed at center stage; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Ole Opry's newest and present home is the Grand Ole Opry House, a 4,400-seat auditorium that has become the centerpiece of the Opryland entertainment and resort complex, which also includes the Opryland Hotel, the General Jackson Showboat, the Springhouse Golf Club, the broadcast facilities of WSM-AM and WSM-FM, and Opry Mills as integral components of the Gaylord Entertainment Company; and

WHEREAS, the musical magic of the Grand Ole Opry continues today; the Opry presently counts some 70 acts as members of its family, and thousands of people make pilgrimages every year to see and hear the greatest acts in country music perform live; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud the Grand Ole Opry and its remarkable members on the celebration of their 75th Anniversary, and commend them for their countless contributions to the music industry, to the city of Nashville, and to this Volunteer State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend the Grand Ole Opry and its many fine members, both past and present, and as they celebrate the Opry's 75th Anniversary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.